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Abstract Submission: Leeds Beckett Virtual Postgraduate Research Conference 2021

“We just want to make sure that you are protected”: The role of PhD mentors in managing self-doubts, well-being, and career concerns.

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Abstract:

The objectives of this oral presentation are threefold: First, this presentation aims to openly share my experiences of self-doubt, career concerns, and their impact on my own well-being as a doctoral researcher. Second, to share how the role of mentors during my PhD journey have been integral to befriending, challenging, and understanding my own self-doubts and fears within my academic journey. Third, this presentation aims to offer some meaningful take-aways for postgraduates to consider that may benefit their respective professional journeys. During this presentation, I present three stories that highlight how the role of key mentors allowed me to befriend my own self-doubts, transform my own well-being, and to confront the career concerns that obstructed my own perceived progress. The first story focuses on a critical moment experienced with my own PhD supervisors, where a shared realization acted as a turning point to my own well-being. The second story reflects on a discussion with a General Practitioner (GP) on the term ‘imposter syndrome’, which taught me to re-frame how I viewed my own self-doubts. The final story reveals how, through confiding in a career mentor I trusted and looked up to; I felt truly understood, listened to, and inspired to confront the continuous career fears that plagued my postgraduate journey. These reflections provide an insight into my academic journey to date, the ups and downs, the lessons learned, and the subsequent shifts in thinking that these moments inspired. Recommendations are offered around ways to individually and interpersonally manage the self-doubts and career concerns that can endanger well-being in academia. Through sharing a fragment of my story, I hope to invite postgraduate researchers to a wider conversation on the importance of professional vulnerability and mentoring in bolstering our well-being, equipping our own coping resources, and facilitating our own professional journeys.